

## Natsuki Subaru's Splendid Steward Life

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"...Barusu, wake up. It's morning"

He was awoken by a frozen voice, and the sound of curtains being opened, letting in a breeze.

Suddenly pulled down from the world of dreams to the real world, Natsuki Subaru growled and woke up. At times like this, he hated being so good at waking up.

"You're not much help, but at least it doesn't take much to wake you up."

The voice that woke him threw that poison dart at Subaru as he was sitting up in the bed.

Standing in front of Subaru as he rubbed sleep from his eyes was a beautiful girl in a maid outfit.

Her red hair was short, and her light red eyes were clear. The girl with a cold expression fixed on her pretty face was named Ram. At the mansion where Subaru was helping out, she was one of only two maids.

"Come now, stop dozing off and get changed. If you keep causing me trouble, I'll report it to Roswaal-sama and your position will be taken away."

"Can't we at least say 'Good Morning' or something?... oof"

Stifling a yawn at her strict words, Subaru somehow managed to crawl out of bed. Having placed a change of clothing beside him on the bed, Ram turned to leave.

"Get changed, and meet up with us promptly. Don't even think about something as foolish as going back to sleep."

"What on earth are you saying to a hard-working man like me? I'll be right there, ma'am."

"...Be quick."

Ram said no more, and Subaru watched as she quickly left the room.

Frowning at Ram's cold attitude, Subaru took off the jersey he slept in, and, stripped down to his underwear, picked up the change of clothing.

Today was the fourth day since he was hired to work here, at the Roswaal Mansion. His body wasn't yet familiar with the job, or even with the concept of hard work. The fact that he was still sleepy was good proof of that.

Pulling on the sleeves, Subaru adjusted the oddly large number of ornaments on his clothing. Placing the last bit of the uniform firmly on his head, Subaru unsteadily made his way down the early-morning hallway. The meeting spot was the mansion's main entrance hall. Subaru made his way there while hunching his back in the chilly morning air.

"There you are, Baru..."

Ram greeted Subaru as he came out of the hallway and arrived at the main entrance hall. But, her expression stiffened as she looked at him, and her greeting halted in the middle. At her reaction, Subaru inclined his head slightly.

He'd changed into his uniform while sleepy, perhaps something was off with it?

"Oh, Subaru-kun? Good morning. Let's work hard today..."

The girl who had been facing Ram, with her back to Subaru, turned around. It was Ram's twin, Rem. Indistinguishable from her sister aside from her blue hair and eye color, she too looked at Subaru and froze.

While her attitude was softer, Rem was even stricter about work than Ram. Subaru looked down at his outfit, checking again to see if anything didn't look quite right.

Starting with a white base, it was a stylish outfit in black. The skirt extended below his knees, and the sleeve cuffs billowed. The frilly apron was straight, and the ribbon in the back that completed the outfit's appearance was done up properly. Worrying that perhaps the hair ornament wasn't on right, Subaru put his hand to his head... at that, he finally realized what was wrong.

"Why am I dressed up in a maid outfit!?"

"Bwaha!"

At the same time as Subaru's morning yell, Ram and Rem both burst out laughing.

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"Even if they were sleepy, someone would normally notice something like that while getting dressed."

"For you to dress up in the entire thing and come all the way to the meeting spot... I have to wonder if that's one of your hobbies."

After their bout of laughter, Ram and Rem continued to press home the point about Subaru's sleepy-headed behavior. Maid Subaru listened to their criticism with a vein standing out on his head.

"Is there anything else you'd like to tell me?"

"Hmm, yes. It seems that Frederica's clothing fits you perfectly. It's just as Ram suspected."

"Nee-sama is impressive as always. Rem can't help but admire her courtesy."

"That's not the problem here! And I'm not asking if it looks good on me or not! This is a social issue! The senior maids are making fun of the junior maid here!"

"You're thinking of yourself as a maid, then? Truly impressive, Barusu."

"It seems you really do enjoy seeing yourself that way..."

The twins exchanged whispered words. Seeing that he was getting nowhere, Subaru gave up in despair.

After giving up, he decided to head back to his room and change, and headed that direction.

"See here, Barusu. You're already dressed; where do you think you're going?"

"I thought that before showing such a horrible sight to everyone, I would return to my room and cry."

"That won't do at all. We've already wasted precious time this morning. We really can't afford to lose any more."

"The time we lost was all thanks to the two of you looking at me and laughing it up, wasn't it?"

As Subaru pointed this out, the twins both wore innocent faces. Seeing their reaction, he let out a deep sigh.

"Anyways, I'm gonna get changed. If I go now, I'll get by with only being embarrassed by you two. I can't even imagine letting Emilia-tan see me like this. It would be way beyond embarrassing."

"You're saying that, but it's your first time tasting the unfamiliar feeling of a skirt..."

"Yes, yes, I could really get used to the feeling of freedom...not!"

Unable to help throwing a sarcastic reply back at Ram, who showed no remorse despite being the root of the problem, Subaru started climbing the stairs, trying to get back to his room as soon as possible. The situation needed to be improved, right away.

"Alright, this will be our secret, just ours. I'm begging you, please never speak of it again."

"Losing your nerve halfway through, that certainly your style, Barusu."

"I don't even have a reply for your poison tongue right now. So please, keep it a secret."

"Keep what a secret?"

"Keep up with the conversation here. I'm talking about the fact that I was half-asleep, dressed up as a maid and paraded around..."

In response to the question from above his head, Subaru angrily turned around and retorted...in the middle of that, he found himself looking into a pair of innocent amethyst eyes, and his voice froze. "Hieh" was all that came out.

On the second floor of the entrance hall, standing at the top of the main staircase and looking this way, was a silver-haired girl - recipient of the hospitality of the lord of the manor, and person of interest to Subaru - Emilia.

Brushing her long silver hair, Emilia looked at Subaru as he froze, and tilted her head.

"Umm... I'm sorry. I'm not sure what to say in this sort of situation."

"You might as well laugh with the rest of them."

"I'm sorry, it's not really amusing enough to laugh."

Subaru could only take so much of this. Was the whole world out to get him? What was up with this situation?

Having the girl he had his eye on see him in an unflattering maid outfit, and being unable to laugh about it... he wanted to die.

"Nee-sama, nee-sama. Is this perhaps the sort of thing referred to as public execution?"

"Rem, Rem. A situation like this can lead to losing all human dignity and dying, I would say."

The maid sisters behind him took each other by the hand, and quietly discussed his misery. Subaru's escape attempt had failed so badly, he couldn't even disagree with them.

Most likely, nothing Subaru could say at this point would be convincing. To move was death, to speak was death.

All Subaru could do at this point was try and minimize the damage from this fatal wound. Of course, there's no way to avoid a fatal wound, so he might as well make things as painless as possible.

"Subaru, it's hard for me to know what to say..."

Stammering, Emilia shifted nervously while trying to choose her words carefully for Subaru's sake. In any other situation, Subaru would be overjoyed by her concern for him, but in this situation, he was hopeless.

Seeing Subaru's feelings and expression die second by second, Emilia made up her mind.

"I understand wanting to dress up in cute clothes, too, but I don't think it suits you, Subaru!"

"...huh?"

"Ah, I'm not upset or anything. But, I do feel just a little jealous. Something like what Ram and Rem wear is embarrassing for me, but the length that Frederica wore would be fine..."

"Your reaction to what I'm wearing is just giving it a low score? You're not going to yell at me for being a pervert?"

Emilia was trying to explain as quickly as she could, but she'd missed the point of the conversation. There was no need to bring that to her attention, but it was so far off from what he'd expected, Subaru asked her anyways.

"...? A pervert is a dangerous person, right? Are you dangerous, Subaru?"

"I'm not dangerous at all! A modern safety man, that's me! I see, I see! So I'm more your type the way I usually dress, than like this? Got it, I'll go change!"

Subaru rushed to cut the conversation short, before Emilia could react badly. He could feel the twins' displeased glares stabbing his back, but he simply ignored them.

"I can still get out of this thanks to Emilia's cute absent-mindedness, but I'm not out of the woods yet! I have to get back to my room before Roswaal, or even worse, Beatrice sees...!"

"Deeeeear me, why is everyone gathered here so eaaaarly in the morning?"

"Are you holding a grudge against me or something!?"

As he tried to break away and return to his room, there was yet another arrival at the entrance hall.

In clown makeup and an eccentric outfit, there was no mistaking the master of the mansion, Roswaal. This in spite of the way he always kept to himself until it was time for breakfast.

"Today of all days, why! Not just Emilia-tan, but Ros-chi shows up too!?"

"If I had to say, it's because I just knew I haaaaad to. If I didn't get up early and come have a look I knew I'd regret it...and indeed, I've seen something quiiiiiite interesting."

As Roswaal approached, he looked at Subaru with the unpleasant smile of someone enjoying themselves a little too much. Under that indecent gaze, Subaru held down the hem of his skirt and backed away without thinking.

"It loooooooks like you've got everything in place. If I had to guess, I'd say this actually isn't your first time wearing women's clothing?"

"Well actually, there was something back at the high school entrance ceremony... hey, quit digging into my dark past! Crap! Now I'll never get to be a bride! Emilia-tan, please say we can be married!"

"Hm? But you're a boy, Subaru, so you couldn't have been a bride in the first place, right?"

As Subaru stood on the verge of tears, Emilia's innocently demolished him, and he broke down crying.

It could only be called terrible. Having been unintentionally seen in women's clothing, now he knew that fate was playing with him.

"If I'd known I was going to be seen, I'd at least like to have put a real effort into it, and faced it with the makeup and underwear done properly...!"

"Is that the problem? You really are a little strange, Subaru."

As he half-seriously recovered, regretting being carried along by the situation, Emilia gave Subaru a wry grin.

Seeing her response, he boldly stood tall and folded his arms, getting control of himself.

"Here are four of the six people in the mansion! Having been seen by sixty-six percent of you, I've made the manly decision it would be best to finish the job! Certainly, once it's up to one hundred percent, we'll all have a good laugh!"

"That's a manly decision, but you don't look at all manly right now."

"What a noisy bunch you are so early in the morning! One might wonder what you're doing out here, I suppose."

A small cat pulling aside silver hair, and a girl with horizontal-rolled hair opening the front entrance, made their appearance.

"It's not like I actually called for either of you! Give me a break!"

"What!? What kind of comment is that!? It's not like I would show up even if you did... if you... You! That outfit is ridiculous, I suppose! You pervert!"

"Be quiet, drill girl! You're in no position to be pointing fingers about clothes! On top of that, if you think about it, your Bubby is pretty much running around stark naked all the time, isn't he?!"

"Hey, I'm properly dressed in fur. Pardon my smell, poot poot."

"Don't do it, Bubby! You'll catch pervert from him, I suppose! You must escape with Betty!"

Carrying on like that, the unexpected morning gathering of the mansion's inhabitants continued to chatter noisily.

It goes without saying that this day's breakfast was quite a bit later than usual.

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"Ah, good grief. Today was a disaster. It's just not my lucky day."

At the end of the day's work, Subaru changed back into his jersey and sighed.

In the end, he had defiantly worked the entire day in the maid outfit. He was left with the feeling he'd lost something important as a person, but in exchange, he also had a feeling of accomplishment, as though he'd won a small victory against an unseen something.

It might be better to say he felt self-satisfaction -- he was surprised at his own character, unchanging even across worlds.

"I guess I put a lot of effort into something silly. I really ought to learn better."

It wouldn't do to be disliked for being too foolish. Especially by that adorable silver-haired girl.

"Even with that, I'm surprised that Emilia-tan doesn't mind maid outfits. Or maybe that means she's not impressed with the butler outfit I normally wear...? That'd be a downer."

Turning his head, he thought back to seeing himself confidently wearing the butler outfit, reflected in the full-length mirror.

"Well then, tomorrow I'll just have to blow away everyone's memories of the maid outfit, by putting on a magnificent show as a butler. Yeah. On a more intimate note, isn't it about time I asked Emilia for a date?"

After his work was finished, and Emilia's studies were done, he could call it an invitation for a refreshing walk.

The flower field at the nearby village, and the little animal that the children had been excited about. There were lots of things to look forward to.

Dreaming about the fun times tomorrow, Subaru's today came to a close.

The promise of a date, and the world once again turning on him, sat unseen in his future, two days away.

